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Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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Department of Fisheries, Wildlife & Environmental Law Enforcement

John C. Phillips, *Commissioner*

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LAND PROTECTION PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Department of Fisheries, Wildlife & Environmental Law Enforcement
AND
Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

As the state agencies charged with protecting native plant and animal species of the Commonwealth, the Department of Fisheries, Wildlife & Environmental Law Enforcement and the Division of Fisheries & Wildlife are working to identify the most ecologically important habitat areas across the state. Our primary mission is to protect the ecological integrity of the biological resources of the Commonwealth. We seek to assure biological diversity by acquiring the most important fish and wildlife habitat and natural communities. All lands we now own are open for appropriate recreational use. This program also acquires land to provide public access to the lands and waters of the Commonwealth.

The Department's land stewardship team is working to identify, evaluate, and acquire top-quality fish and wildlife habitat and natural communities. This effort is designed to enable us to even more effectively carry out our stewardship mission to safeguard the natural heritage of the Commonwealth as spelled out in the statement of Mandate, Structure and Goals of the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. To achieve this end, we are focusing on acquiring the most environmentally valuable and important habitats and natural communities in order to adequately protect all the native plant and animal species entrusted to our care.

The lands we protect include river corridors, wetlands, various type of forested upland, habitat of state listed endangered and threatened species and species of special concern, and high quality examples of other important habitat types. Our current holdings stretch from the Berkshires to the Cape and Islands and total over 91,000 acres.

Funding for the program comes from two sources. The primary funding mechanism is the Commonwealth's open space bond authorization of 1996. A spending cap on these funds is established administratively each fiscal year. The other source is revenue from the Land Stamp program. Under this program each individual who buys a hunting, fishing or trapping license in Massachusetts pays five dollars into the Land Stamp Fund which is then available for appropriation the following year.

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An Agency of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs
Trudy Coxe, *Secretary*